DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 523 CS 508 734

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TITLE Media Theory: A Framework for Interdisciplinary Conversations.
PUB DATE Aug 94
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (77th, Atlanta, GA, August 10-13, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); Futures (of Society); Higher Education; *Intellectual Disciplines; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Mass Media; *Media Research; Models; Technological Advancement; Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Cultural Studies; Interdisciplinary Cooperation

ABSTRACT

As the field of media studies progresses it moves with increasing fluency and fluidity among the disciplines, and the patterns of relationship that adhere in these dynamics hint at what the disciplines have to say to each other in general. For media studies to exercise a significant impulse toward holism and interdisciplinary synthesis, a model is needed that underscores these patterns of relationship, processes, and interactions--these sites of interdisciplinary communication. Various paradigms, including those of Lasswell, Burke, Rowland, and Simon Jones, along with the Birmingham and Frankfurt Schools and postmodern aesthetics offer guides in investigating how the design of the information superhighway might impact a particular culture's trends or patterns of social relations. Will an electronic media underclass (those without on-line access) emerge? And what will be the relations between this underclass and other members of society, those characterized as experimenting with virtual intimacy and with fluency in new media vocabularies? The theoretical approach to the problem should involve moving back and forth between patterns of human thought within a changing symbolic environment and patterns of media access: semiotics and diffusion theory. Media studies is fundamentally the study of communication--it is intertwined with and inseparable from the processes of human communication that require no hard technologies and that are the focus of those studying rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and the like. Media scholars might repay their debt to other disciplines by offering some updated perspectives on how the various humanities and social sciences can better communicate with each other. (Contains 11 figures and 25 references.) (NKA)

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Media Theory: A Framework for Interdisciplinary Conversations

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Introduction: Toward an Interdisciplinary Theory of Media Studies

In the Summer 1993 "special" issue of the *Journal of Communication* devoted to "The Future of the Field," the articles are rife with calls for cohesion and synthesis. James Beniger wishes for "a synthesis of subject matter and models, if not of theory" that "would force the study of any one behavioral or social phenomenon to confront all others." (p. 23) Robert Craig hopes that "ways can be found by which the various, apparently incompatible or unrelated modes of communication theory that now exist can be brought into more productive dialogue with one another." (p. 32) Klaus Krippendorf suggests that the strands of communication scholarship "could be woven into a radically *new and virtuous synthesis*" (italics his). (p. 40) Brenda Dervin calls for the study of communication "to stop taking sides and start moving toward multiple perspectives that might inform each other in a dialogue of differences." (p. 50) I find Dervin's portrayal of how our field fits into the larger interdisciplinary picture especially compelling:

> ...the bottom line is this: From the beginning we have stood more in between--the humanities and the social sciences, the social sciences and the physical sciences, the fields within the social sciences--than any other field. While other fields worry about long-time fractionalizations, our disarray is characterized by often disarming fluidity....
> While others may be rushing in to claim the ground we have tread, from the beginning we have had to deal with theory and practice, micro and macro, structure and agency. And from the beginning we have had to deal with process. We have praised process, we have even offered it to the world as practical wisdom. We have only recently begun to acknowledge it and develop it intellectually. It is process, however...where we have something to offer that is, if not ultimately unique, at least for now ahead of the others. Because of this, we can lead the way, if only we will. (p. 50)

To the extent that the term "information age" appropriately characterizes the contemporary human condition, the study of communication in general and media studies in particular will probably have, as Dervin suggests, an increasingly central role to play among the disciplines. And our stepping into this role depends on our ability to underscore interdisciplinary conversations, or perhaps more appropriately, communications.

Human history is a history of communications. Our sociology is a sociology of communications. Our anthropology, our psychology, our politics, our religion, our literature, our education, are all "of communication." The strains of inquiry employed in media studies follow certain inherent patterns of relationship with each other. As the field progresses it moves with increasing fluency and fluidity among the disciplines, and the patterns of relationship that inhere in these dynamics hint at what the disciplines have to say to each other in general. So media studies can exercise a significant impulse toward holism and interdisciplinary synthesis. In joining the widespread call for synthesis in our field, then, I will attempt to provide a model or map of the field that underscores these patterns of relationship, processes, interactions--these sites of interdisciplinary communication.

The Sociological/Empirical "Effects" Paradigm as Prologue

As my subhead suggests, I am presuming to relegate the "effects" tradition to history. But the conception of history I am applying embraces it as a process that always lives in us as a species--and in all places and times. The "effects" tradition is the history that I will argue needs to finally pass from within the theoretical center of media studies, but which should continue to dwell in our immediate outskirts and which resides, whether we want it to or not, in popular (and therefore crucial) discourse. It is, in short, our field's evolutionary embarking point.

The effects tradition is also framed by a grander evolutionary embarking point: Western positivist science. I believe, with James Carey, that "All forms of practice and expression, including science, are cultural forms... (and) can only be understood in that light." (Carey, 1989: 103) The Newtonian thrust toward linear, rational science, and the more general Enlightenment project which emphasizes reason and logic, have imbedded themselves in cultural expressions which have long resonated in Western politics, religion and philosophy.

Lasswell's Model and the Effects Paradigm

A foundational model for the effects tradition was Lasswell's "Structure and Function of Communication in Society," which outlines a "scientific study of the process of communication" which "tends to concentrate upon one or another of these questions(:)" ...

Who
Says What
In Which Channel
to Whom
With What Effect?

Lasswell explains that this model maps the field as follows:

> Scholars who study the "who," the communicator, look into the factors that initiate and guide the act of communication. We call this subdivision of the field of research *control analysis*. Specialists who focus upon the "says what" engage in *content analysis*. Those who look primarily at the radio, press, film and other channels of communication are doing *media analysis*. When the principle concern is with the persons reached by the media, we speak of *audience analysis*. If the question is the impact upon audiences, the problem is *effect analysis*. (Lasswell, 1948: 37)

Lasswell's five-pointed model begins to identify and map some of the interdisciplinary terrain that is relevant to media studies. Two key features identify his scientific model as being deeply imbedded in the assumptions and cultural form of Western Newtonian positivism: 1) it is linear and sequential 2) it locates its scholarly inquiry at circumscribed points along the line rather than at sites of interaction between the points.

The "effects" tradition of media research was based on the larger assumption that there was a causal relationship between the media and social behavior, and included investigations into other media and other kinds of social behavior long before television arrived on the scene. This tradition was based generally on the suspicion that, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the ability of the media to gain broad and pervasive access to its audiences would be attended by shifts in the character of culture. The inherent charge and drama of this suspicion and its possible implications turned it into a launching pad for urgent speculation. A simple logical fallacy – that correlation suggests causation – was borne of this urgency. If media fare is suddenly more broadly disseminated and culture is changing, then how are the media changing culture? "What do the media do to people?" became the operative question for a United States experiencing waves of immigration from abroad, a shift of economic and social emphasis to the cities, technologies which marked changes in both leisure and work activity, and the gathering of storm clouds of global conflicts on the horizon, all of which were registered by and reflected in radically modern forms of media.

European social theorists could comfortably analyze the details of class differences and interactions within adequately circumscribed cultural parameters and the lessons of centuries-old traditions. The United States, on the other hand, became home to an unprecedentedly heterogeneous mix of people struggling to come to terms with each other in contexts for which there were no historical scripts. In the U.S., the impulse of social theory to come up with overarching characterizations of culture would have been stymied without the identification of a powerful common thread holding the patchwork together. The media provided a ready choice, and the characterization itself became the notion of the "mass."

The media, then, were assumed to *cause* certain *effects* on the "masses." The fallacy of this assumption was exposed relatively early after grand research projects in this "effects" tradition had been launched. It could be that the insight required to question a simple effects or "hypodermic needle" model was in part a function of an assumption that accompanied the model in the first place: that objective, empirical, quantitative approaches to research were called for – they were best suited to generalization and were predisposed to what was hoped would be a kind of irrefutable conclusiveness that was required as a function of the perceived urgency of the situation and was therefore more likely to be well funded.

For example, the 1933 Payne Fund study on "Motion Pictures and Youth," a classic and standard in this tradition, enjoyed the funding to launch an extensive empirical study designed "to measure the effect of motion pictures upon behavior and conduct," and "to study current motion-picture content and children's attendance at commercial movie theaters to see what they come in contact with when they attend them." The Payne Fund study clung to this type of conclusion: "That the movies exert an influence there can be no doubt." However, it was forced to concede: "But it is our opinion that the influence is specific for a given child and a given movie." (Lowery and DeFleur, 1983: 32-55)

Subsequent research began to acknowledge what Klapper calls "a view of the media as influences, working amid other influences, in a total situation." Katz and Lazarsfeld coined the term "personal influence," to refer to "the

various interpersonal contexts" which accounted for the different effects media apparently had on different people. This shift away from the notion of the mass and the fallacy of simple causation toward a "limited effects" model spawned a new foundational question: "What do people do with media?" Or, specifically in studies of the influence of television violence on children, "What do children do with television?"

Beyond Effects in Audience Research More recent research into audience behavior has emphasized ethnomethodology and a newly burgeoning "qualitative empirical" hybrid which acknowledges the advantages of rigorous objectivity but shifts the foundational assumptions away from those of earlier research and begins to ask not only "what do people do with media?," but also, "in what ways do media fit into the larger context of people's lives?"

Meanwhile, "textual analysis" of television content has arisen from what Newcomb calls the recognition "that the ideas and the symbols that express them on television are not 'created' there," that they have a significance embedded in American culture. The questions here become: "what do people do *to* media?" and "how do the media reflect the culture back to itself? So the composite of audience research and textual research asks "What is the nature of the exchange between culture and the media?

• •

Theoretically Divisive "Effects" of Effects An important sense in which the "effects" tradition still lives in us is that our mapping of the field is based on distinctly separate points of inquiry which are aligned according to polarized axes. This underscores circumscribed camps, usually quadrants of disciplinary territory as in McQuail (1989) and Rosengren (1993). (see Figures 2 & 3).

I concur, then, with Brenda Dervin's diagnosis:

> Most of the polarities that divide our field--universalist vs. contextual theories, administrative vs. critical research, qualitative vs. quantitative approaches, the micro vs. the macro, the theoretic vs. the applied, feminist vs. nonfeminist--are symptoms, not the disease. They are shallow indicators of something more fundamental. (1993:45)

That "something more fundamental" is the epistemological and socio-cultural legacy of our entanglement with the effects tradition and its deep Western Enlightenment roots. The call to synthesis in the study of communications has been a call to withdraw from our disciplinary quadrants and communicate with each other.

Of Three Pentads: Lasswell, Burke and Simon Jones

The paradigmatic fallacy (or perhaps anachronism) of Lasswell's five-part model, in short, is that it posits "effect" as a final destination rather than a process of interactions that happen everywhere along the path. There is fundamental and indispensable salience to studying the "who" that produces messages, the "what" of the media texts produced, the "what channel" that constitutes differences, commonalties and interactions among media technologies (conceived of in a broad enough sense to include, for example, language), and the "to whom" that constitutes publics or audiences. The "with what effect?" question is not extraneous or irrelevant--cultural processes, of course, involve exchanges of influence. The problem with Lasswell's last stop on the continuum is one of location and directionality--it purports that the only effect worth considering is that which "happens to" the public or audience. The vast remainder of the territory in media studies can be described as the study of how each point that precedes the "effect" on Lasswell's continuum serves as both an origin and a destination for cultural process.

Kenneth Burke's "pentad" method of analyzing motivation in symbolic action constitutes a kind of motivational "grammar" in communication that can both amplify and correct Lasswell's model. Burke's rationale for this model goes as follows: "In a rounded statement about motives you must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what instrument or means he used (*agency*), and the *purpose*." (quoted in Foss et al., 1991: 184) While Burke is suggesting that the pentad is imbedded in, and therefore applies primarily to, rhetorical artifacts, it also resonates on a "macro" level to the grander cultural processes on which media studies focus. If we overlay Burke's pentad on Lasswell's, these correspondences arise: Who (agent) says what (act) through what channel (agency). Burke's "purpose" suggests a destination which might seem at first to correspond with Lasswell's "effect," but it also points to the intended recipient of the effect, the "to whom." And finally, Burke's "scene"--the notion of background, situation, context, is the conspicuous absence in Lasswell's model that accounts for part of its inadequacy.

Media scholar Simon Jones introduces the following common-sensical five-point model for approaching media studies to his undergraduate classes: 1) Institution 2) Producer/Artist 3) Medium 4) Text 5) Audience. These

analogies between Burke's model for rhetorical analysis and Jones' model for media studies arise: 1) Scene--Institution 2) Agent--Producer/ Artist 3) Agency-- Medium 4) Act--Text 5) Purpose--Audience.

It is important to underscore that the parallels I am pointing to among Lasswell, Burke and Jones are not meant to provide an exhaustive rendering of their conceptual intentions. I am merely proposing that the recognition of certain elements that correspond to each other in these models might prove *useful* in developing a model or map of interdisciplinary conversation points. This said, then, the sites of inquiry along a five-point model based on Jones and Burke are explained below:

Institution. Burke's conception of "scene" helps set parameters for Jones' first point--the institutional aspect of the model is contextual; it constitutes the circumstances out of which the production and distribution of mediated messages arise. Rowland's (1993) catalogue of the concerns of this aspect is apt and succinct: "...questions about media organizations and structures, ownership and control, resources and technologies, and professional standards and models." A scholarly focus on the institutional aspect, then, would study the "media and means of cultural production...as national and transnational institutions bound by exterior and interior realities and engaged in the social construction of media content and services as foundries for the creation of meaning." (p:213)

Producer/Artist and Medium. Rowland's "communication research and teaching model for telecommunications" conceives of the institutional aspect as a "portion of the analysis... (which) tends to see the technologies and industries of telecommunications...as the products of human economic and political endeavor in given times and places subject to specific social forces." (1993:213) This conception subsumes both the producer/artist and the medium from Jones' model, which serves the particular need within telecommunications research to "point it toward more critical policy discourse." (208) However, the blurring of institution (scene) with producer (agent) and medium (agency) would confuse a grander view of media studies as an interdisciplinary synthesis which seeks to reveal more than simply the power relations of meaning-making within cultural processes. To this grander view of media studies, the artist and the medium are both distinct and important, and to study them *independently* of institutional contexts, then, would lend a fullness to the inquiry of our field which would enhance its descriptive power when institutional aspects are factored back in.

Texts and Audiences. The other two aspects of study in Rowland's teaching model for telecommunications, "messages and content" and "audiences and publics," correspond neatly to "text" and "audience" in Jones' model. Rowland's view of the study of the messages and content aspect asserts that it "is oriented toward criticism and interpretation, exploring manifest and latent meanings in all forms of expression and information in the society." His approach to audiences and publics "examines the broader social, cultural, and ideological conditions in which people live and how in constructing those conditions people shape and affect the communication systems of which they are a part." (1993: 213-214)

Along with the institutional aspects of telecommunications study, content and audience form Rowland's triangular model within which critical and cultural studies operate:

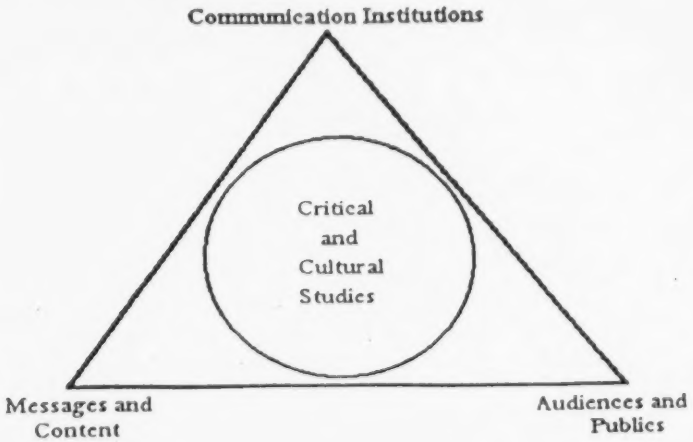

Figure 1 (Rowland, 1993: 213)

Rowland's triangle model evokes a graphic sense of interrelationship among domains of inquiry that helps correct the uni-directional linear model of the effects tradition. I also find Rowland's model more satisfying than the quadrant models which are built on dichotomized axes of scholarly orientation and which suggest circumscribed camps that define themselves, in part, by their opposition to each other (see Figures 2 and 3).

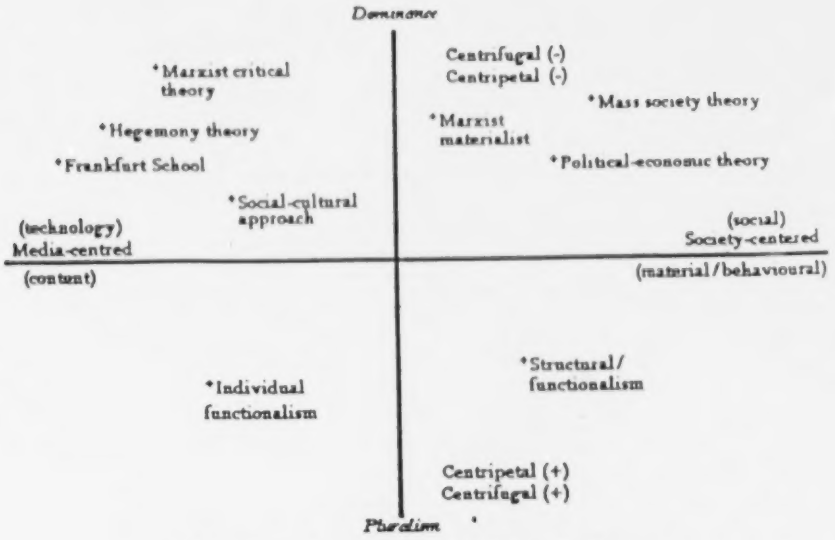

Figure 2

Main dimensions and locations of media theory by McQuail (1987)

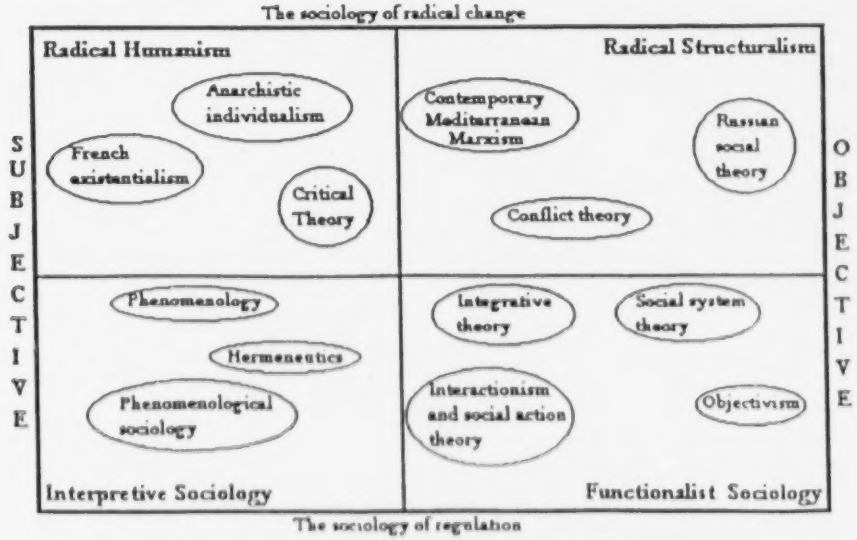

Figure 3

Rosengren's model of sociological research (after Burrell & Morgan 1979)

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To Re Envision Media Theory: Modeling an Interdisciplinary Architecture

In the interest of developing a more comprehensive media studies model I would like to introduce a pentagon-shaped model which would add the two extra domains set forth by Burke and Jones to Rowland's use of a synthesis-oriented geometric shorthand:

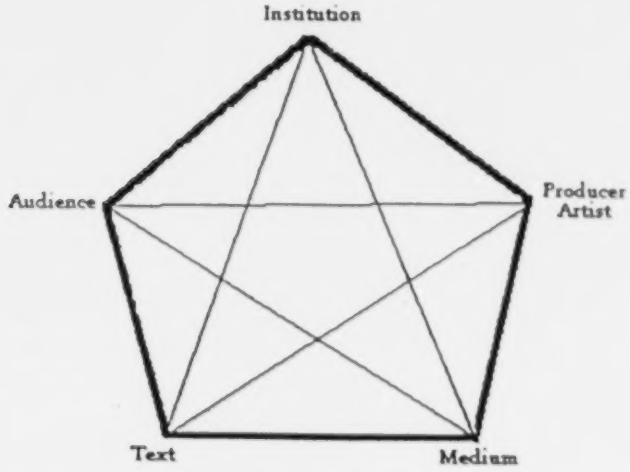


Figure 4

The pentagon model is designed merely as an aid to visualizing, organizing and thereby simplifying the interactions among strains of inquiry relevant to media studies. It represents an attempt to provide a basis for mapping the strains and emphases of media studies in terms of how they might confer with each other rather than in terms of who rules which territory. It also suggests a number of disciplinary arenas of concentration described by triangular relationships--the Rowland model would be one good example. The utility of conceiving such triadic relationships is well-developed in semiotic theory, which posits the irreducibility of the relationship between signifier, signified and interpretant. Semiotics asserts that it is specifically the *interaction among* the elements in the triad that constitutes a basic unit of analysis, and the model we are setting forth here relies on this principle.

Interdisciplinary Conversations:
Building Materials for the Architecture of Media Studies

Excluded points Drawing from semiotics, we are employing a sense of irreducibility of interaction that inheres in a triad. For each triangle two of the pentagon's points will be excluded. This is not to suggest that the excluded points have no relevance to the domain of the triangle, only that their relevance is either 1) *subsumed* in the pillars of the triangle, as is the case for "artist/producer" and "medium" in Rowland's model, 2) relevant *implicitly* or *indirectly*, as are particular texts in historical survey courses or genre studies trained on film or literature, or 3) in the process of being *shifted away* from, as in the shift away from the institutional domain as the central and dominant purveyor of mediated messages, which will be discussed later in our curriculum agenda problem.

Particular/Practical vs. General/Theoretical Triangles. The order in which the five sites of inquiry are arranged is of crucial importance to our architecture (although our theoretical conceptualizations can benefit from our movement both clockwise and counterclockwise). For example, if we begin with "Institution" and move clockwise, then, the chain of process can be described as follows: The "Institution" gives privileges and puts constraints on the "Producer/Artist," who applies these conditions to her creative process as she employs a

"Medium" to produce a "Text," which is presented to an "Audience," which in turn gives feedback to the "Institution," which influences the privileges and constraints it places on the "Producer/Artist," and so on.

This model allows for ten possible triads (see Appendix I). Each of the ten triangles takes one of two possible forms based on the pentagon's chain of process. The first kind of triangle arises from three points that appear in a continuum (as in Institution/Audience/Text), in other words there are no breaks between points as we trace their path along the pentagon. The second kind of triangle arises from two adjacent points and a third point which is separated from the others on each side by excluded points (as in Institution/Text/ Medium).

Because the first kind of triangle incorporates three points along a continuous chain of process, the domains that these triangles describe are grounded in and guided by the dynamics of present and transitory conditions that are particular to a location in space. For example, the Frankfurt School belongs, as in Rowland's model, to the Institution/Audience/Text triangle (the particularity of both media technologies and producer/artists is subsumed by their service to the state apparatus). The Frankfurt School emphasizes the audience or public's interaction with both mediated texts and what Althusser would call the ideological apparatuses of the state. These interactions are historically contingent--inseparable from the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of their practice in a particular location in space and time, so we will think of them as *particular* or *practical*.

The second kind of triangle incorporates two points which are linked on the chain of process and a third point which is arrived at by *bypassing* a point on each side of the pentagon's continuum. There is an element of these triangles, then, which *evades* historical contingency--these triangles, which include, for example, inquiry into postmodern aesthetics or Levi-Straussian and Saussurian structuralism (structuralism before ideological agendas are factored in) speak to the unfolding through time and space of aesthetic, philosophical, cognitive, epistemological and other grand general trends of theory--so we will think of them as *general* or *theoretical*.

The Nature of Relationships Between Arenas of Focus in Media Studies. Whenever two triangular territories are mapped on the pentagon, they will either *overlap*, line up *adjacently*, or *diverge* from a common point. "Overlap," "Adjacency," and "Divergence," then, will be employed as labels for the character of relationships between territories of media studies. "Overlap" can be further divided into three possible relationships: 1)overlap of two general/theoretical triangles, 2) overlap of two particular/practical triangles and 3) overlap of one of each kind of triangle. The qualities of each kind of relationship will be explained using examples from among the triangles. Graphic representations and summaries which exemplify (but do not exhaust) the central concerns--e.g. schools of thought, major studies, key scholars--associated with each of the ten triangles can be found in Appendix I. With our understanding of how to think of the *excluded points* of each triangle, the two *types* of triangles and the kinds of *relationships* among triangles in place, we will now begin charting and exploring the terrain of media studies.

Relationship I: Adjacency

Example A: Birmingham and Frankfurt Schools (A-I-T) and Postmodern Aesthetics (I-M-T)

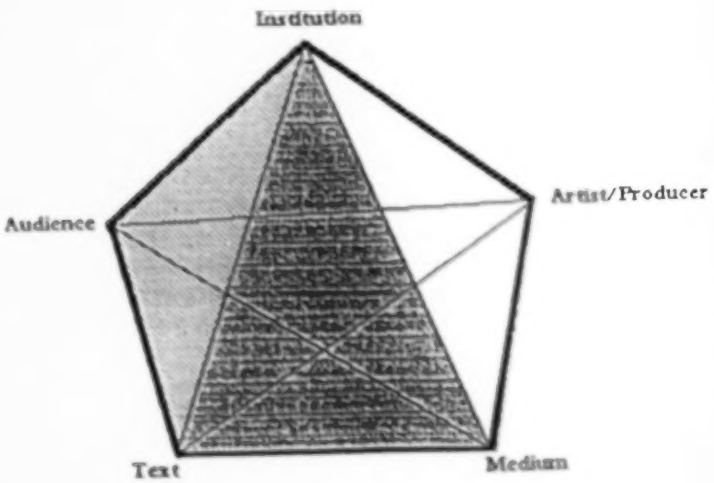


Figure 5

"Adjacency" is the relationship between a general/theoretical triangle and a particular/practical triangle which do not overlap--the two triangles share two points and a common edge. As the graphic suggests, the interaction between the two triangles constitutes a mutual and complementary expansion of the domain of inquiry. Let us turn, then, to our example.

The Institution/Audience/Text triangle, which we were first exposed to in Rowland's model, is embodied by British Cultural Studies and the Frankfurt School and the Marxist, neo-Marxist and Socialist strains which insist on grounding the interactions between audiences and texts in their material relations with the larger institutional contexts.

Hegemonic theory Hegemonic theory concentrates less on the economic and structural determinants of a class-biased ideology and more on ideology itself, the forms of its expression, its ways of signification and the mechanisms by which it survives and flourishes with the apparent compliance of its victims (mainly the working class) and succeeds in invading and shaping their consciousness. Hegemonic theory departs from the classic Marxist and political-economic approach in that it recognizes a greater degree of independence of ideology from the economic base. As Stuart Hall explains:

> That notion of dominance which meant the direct imposition of one framework, by overt force or ideological compulsion, on a subordinate class, was not sophisticated enough to match the complexities of the case. One had also to see that dominance was accomplished at the unconscious level as well as the conscious level: to see it as a property of the system of relations involved, rather than as the overt and intentional biases of individuals in the very activity of regulation and exclusion which functioned through language and discourse. (Hall: 1982, p. 95)

Ideology, then, or in the words of Althusser (1971), "the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence," does not dominate in the sense of being forced on society by ruling classes. It is instead a pervasive and inherent cultural influence which serves to interpret experiences of reality according to collective thought structures.

British Cultural Studies/Birmingham School This path of scholarship is marked by a more positive approach to the products of mass culture and by the wish to understand the meaning and place assigned to popular culture in the experience of particular groups in society -- the young, the working class, ethnic minorities and other marginal categories. The cultural approach seeks also to explain how mass culture plays a part in integrating and subordinating potentially deviant or oppositional elements in society.

This set of approaches has led to the investigation of the products and contexts of consumption in popular culture in work carried out, in particular, at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham during the '70s. One of the Centre's key scholars, Stuart Hall, writes that the cultural studies approach:

> stands opposed to the residual and merely reflective role assigned to the 'cultural.' In its different ways it conceptualises culture as inter-woven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity ... it is opposed to the base-superstructure way of formulating the relationship between ideal and material forces, especially where the base is defined by the determination by the 'economic' in any simple sense... It defines 'culture' as both the means and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationship, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence (quoted in Gurevitch et al 1982, 26-27)

The social-cultural approach seeks to attend to both messages and publics, aiming to account for patterns of choice and response in relation to the media by a careful and critically-directed understanding of the actual social experience of sub-groups within society. The whole enterprise is also usually informed by the scrutiny of how power holders manage the recurrent crises of legitimacy and economic failure held to be endemic in industrial capitalist society (Hall 1978).

Postmodern Aesthetics The Institution/Medium/Text triangle focuses on how the interactions between media and texts reflect institutional agendas. Recalling that the term "postmodernism" first arose as a reference to an aesthetic strain in architecture, a good example of an inhabitant of this triangle would be the general arena of postmodern aesthetics *before* we build either the tensions of power relations involving *publics/audiences* or the visions of particularized *artists* back in to our discussion.

Jean Baudrillard's *Simulations* explores postmodern aesthetics, wherein "The very definition of the real becomes that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction. The definition of the hyper-real: that which is always already reproduced. (1983:146) For Baudrillard, "endless reproduction" puts an end to a cultural system's "myth of origin and to all the referential values it has itself secreted along the way." (1983:112). For Baudrillard, postmodern aesthetics are "no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself, that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double." Culture, then, amounts to a "metastable programmatic perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short circuits all its vicissitudes." (1983:4).

As we have said earlier, the relationship between the British Cultural Studies/Frankfurt School and the Postmodern Aesthetics triangles should be one of mutual and complementary expansion of the domain of inquiry. For example, the *particular/practical* focus of Raymond Williams' *The Long Revolution* (1961), then, can help inform and be informed by the *general/ theoretical* focus of Baudrillard's *Simulations*. A *theoretical* view of how humans conceptualize "reality" in a rapidly changing media environment can be located in the *particular* dynamics of *practices* taking place in 19th century working-class England. The material and cultural setting of Williams' book can also exemplify grander principles of reality construction. Taken together, these two domains build power relations back in to postmodern aesthetics.

The continuity between postmodern aesthetics and power relations is familiar ground to Frederick Jameson:

> If ...the whole aesthetic of representation is metaphysical and ideological, philosophical discourse can no longer entertain this vocation, and it must stand as the mere addition of another text to what is now conceived as an infinite chain of texts (not necessarily all verbal – daily life is a text, clothing is a text, state power is a text, that whole external world, about which 'meaning' or 'truth' were once asserted and which is now contemptuously characterized as the illusion of reference or the 'referent,' is an indeterminate superposition of texts of all kinds). Whence the significance of the currently fashionable slogan of 'materialism' when sounded in the area of philosophy and theory: materialism here means the dissolution of any belief in 'meaning' or in the 'signified' conceived as ideas or concepts that are distinct from their linguistic expressions (1992:139).

We are also familiar with this expanded domain, for example, in the work of Jacques Lyotard, whose description of the postmodern condition involves "incredulity toward metanarratives," (Alexander, et al, 1990:330) which suggests shifting dynamics between human cognitive and cultural interpretation processes and the totalizing ideologies inherent in nationalist agendas.

Adjacency, Example B:

Frankfurt School (A-I-T) and Liberal Political Economic Theories (I-P-T)

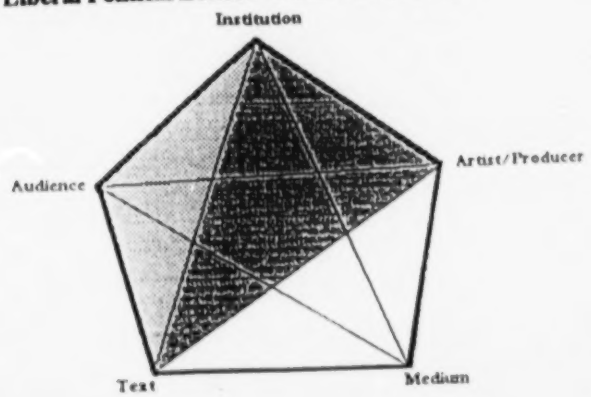


Figure 6

Another example of how adjacency clarifies the mutual benefit and expansion of a particular/practical and a general/theoretical domain in media studies can be seen in the relationship between the Institution/Audience/Text domain which includes the Frankfurt School, and the Institution/ Producer/Text domain which includes liberal political economic theory associated with Ben Bagdikian, Michael Parenti, Noam Chomsky and others.

This body of theory focuses more on economic structure than on the ideological content of the media. It asserts the dependence of ideology on the economic base and directs research attention to the empirical analysis of the structure of ownership and to the way media market forces operate. Media institutions are considered part of the economic system with close links to the political system. The predominant character of the knowledge of and for society produced by the media can be largely accounted for by the exchange value of different kinds of content, under conditions of pressure to expand markets, and by the underlying economic interests of owners and decision-makers.

The consequences are to be observed in the reduction of independent media sources, concentration on the largest markets, avoidance of risk-taking, neglect of smaller and poorer sectors of the potential audience. The effects of economic forces are not random but, according to Murdock and Goldin, work constantly to exclude:

> those voices lacking economic power or resource... the underlying logic of cost operates systematically, consolidating the positions of groups already established in the main mass-media markets and excluding those groups who lack the capital base required for successful entry. Thus the voices which survive will largely belong to those least likely to criticise the prevailing distribution of wealth and power. Conversely, those most likely to challenge these arrangements are unable to publicise their dissent or opposition because they cannot command resources needed for effective communication to a broad audience. (1977: 37)

In this domain the lens is pointed at the *institutional* forces that influence what *producers* can and cannot say (*texts*). The audience is *implicit* in the directives issued by the institutions, and media technologies are *implicit* in the relations between producers and their texts.

A common confusion in comparing the liberal theorists with the Frankfurt scholars is rooted in the fact that both put forth quite penetrating indictments of the operation of institutional forces, but the Frankfurt scholars are much more oriented to the hope of systemic revolution, while the liberal scholars implicitly advocate reform from within the system. The two camps are often characterized as being in ultimate opposition to each other since one advocates revolution and the other supposedly "reifies" the system by suggesting that internal reform is possible.

Ultimately I question the usefulness of characterizing these two domains as diametrically opposed in some hidden way that only theoretically sophisticated scholars can tease out. The "adjacency" model satisfies the impulse to take these two bodies of discourse as complementary and mutually expansive. The general/theoretical triangle which includes liberal theory is based on tracing the manifestations of underlying thought structures associated with capitalism and democracy, such as the tensions between foundational principles like freedom and equality, or First Amendment issues like censorship. The particular/practical triangle which includes the Frankfurt School tells us more about how those thought structures operate in particular sites of cultural tension. Taken together (adjacently), rather than in any sort of fundamental opposition, their explanatory and critical power is quite expansive.

Relationship II: Divergence
Example: The Ritual View (A-M-T) and Management/NewsRoom Demographics Studies (P-I-A)
Bridged by Narrative Structures (P-M-A)

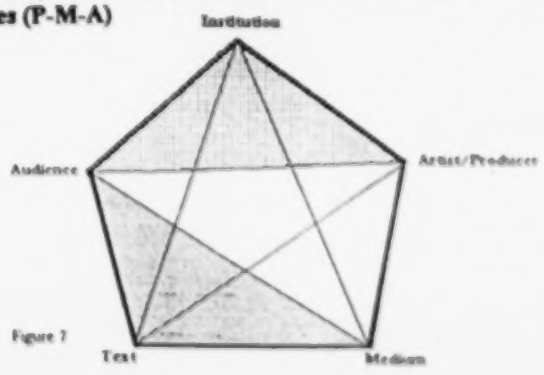


Figure 7

"Divergence" is the relationship between two particular/practical triangles which share only one point in common, and therefore neither overlap nor share an edge in common. The relationship between two divergent triangles is usually much more obscure than is the case with adjacent and overlapping triangles. The space between two divergent triangles describes a general/theoretical triangle which can be consulted for clues to the connection between the divergent triangles.

In our example, the Audience/Medium/Text triangle includes Carey's "ritual view" of communication, very much located in the *particulars* of individual cultural settings. This view *shifts away* from the assumption that institutional agendas decide on and transmit the experience of publics/audiences. As Roger Silverstone asserts, "The study of bourgeois culture as ideology, of ideology as mystification, and of mystification as falsehood may be a good part of the story but it is not all of it. (1988: 21) The ritual view also *subsumes* the artist/producer into the audience by concentrating on the reception and interpretation of media texts as the focal site of meaning-making.

Meanwhile, the Producer/Institution/Audience triangle, also located in historical *particulars*, seems to have little connection to the ritual view. In this triangle we situate studies of newsroom demographics (how do the demographics of the *audience* compare to those of the journalists (*producers*) who have been hired by the *institution*?). This is the domain occupied by questions of how race, gender and other points of difference interact with institutional hiring practices and management strategies.

A third, general/theoretical triangle situated between the two outlined above is implied by their divergence. This is the Producer/Medium/Audience triangle, which includes structuralism and genre studies in literature and film. (We will look into the structural "grammar" of film in our "Overlap of General/Theoretical Triangles" section). Particular texts are *subsumed* by the process of looking for the aggregate narrative patterns among them, and the institutional element is *implicit* in the more precisely detailed accounts of how *artists* use particular kinds of *media* to communicate with *audiences*. This third general/theoretical triangle helps provide clues to a connection between the locations of ritualized interaction among audience, medium and text, and, say, the phenomenon of a "glass ceiling" in media corporation hiring policies toward women. The connection, then, resides in the collective processes of narrative construction that arise from media rituals and inform that culture's corporate environs.

Relationship III: Overlap of Particular/Practical Triangles

Example: British Cultural Studies (A-I-T) and the Ritual View in American Cultural Studies (A-M-T)

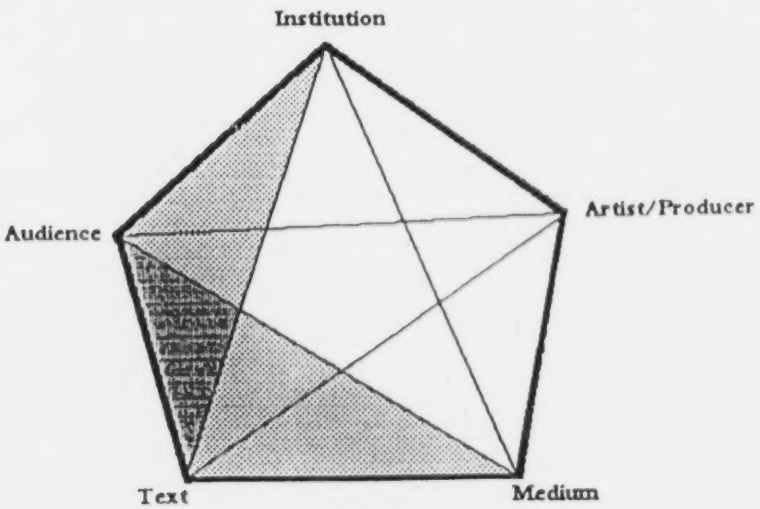


Figure 8

This relationship is characterized by the overlap of two particular/practical triangles. Both triangles are located, then, in historically contingent particulars, and, as the graphic suggests, they together possess key points of both convergence and departure.

In our example, the Audience/Media/Text triangle, which has been explained earlier as the domain of the ritual view associated with American Cultural Studies, overlaps with the Critical (Frankfurt, British Cultural Studies) and Cultural Studies triangle we have seen before in Rowland's model. Guided by the character of an overlap relationship between particular/practical triangles, then, we look for both common ground and points of departure. The character of this overlap is nicely summarized by James Carey:

> Cultural studies, on an American terrain, has been given its most powerful expression by John Dewey and by the tradition of symbolic interactionism that developed out of American pragmatism generally.... Without attempting to do so, Dewey, Park and others in the Chicago School transplanted Weberian sociology in American soil, though happily within the pragmatist attempt to dissolve the distinction between the natural and cultural sciences. Not so happily, though understandably, they also lost the sharper edges of Weberian sociology, particularly its emphasis on authority, conflict and domination, and that will have to be restored to the tradition (Carey 1989: 96).

This notion that American Cultural Studies is "unintentionally" Weberian and less sharp along the Weberian critical edge than British Cultural Studies helps us zero in on a basic point of their divergence. In grappling with American Cultural Studies we may profit, then, by searching for roots in Durkheim, who "deliberately downplayed, in contrast to the Marxist tradition, elements of power and conflict," and who "inverts the relations of base and superstructure: the capitalist economy thrives on the root system of traditional society." (Carey, 1989:109)

Relationship IV: Overlap of General/Theoretical Triangles

Structuralist Film Theory (P-M-A) and Liberal Political Economic Theory (I-P-T)

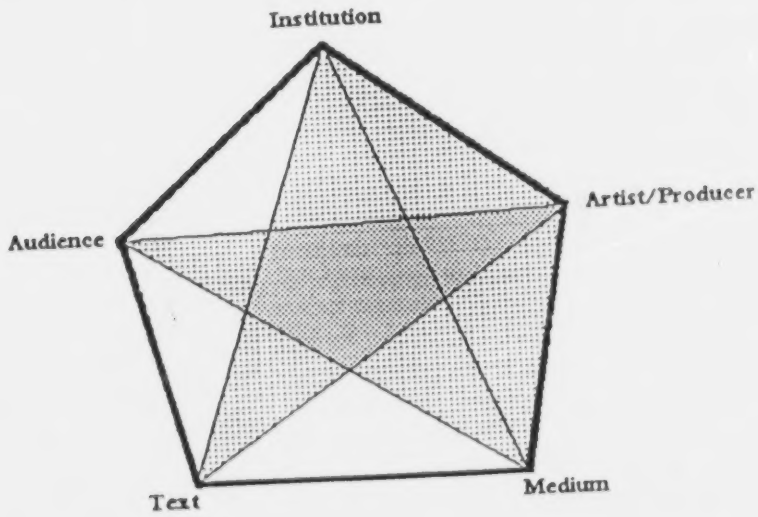


Figure 9

We remember that the domain of general/theoretical triangles evades historical contingency and directs us to aesthetic, philosophical, cognitive, epistemological and other grand concerns relevant to the human condition. The overlap between two of these domains, then, would involve commonalties in how each *theorizes* on the structure of thought, and their discontinuity would involve where each domain *situates* that structure.

In our example, we overlap 1) the Institution/Producer/Text triangle, which has been shown to include liberal political economic theory, as well as censorship and other First Amendment issues, with 2) the Producer/Medium/Audience/ triangle, which we visited earlier as the source of clues to the connection between two divergent triangles--narrative structures which bridge a ritual view of communication with the study of managerial styles and hiring practices. As suggested earlier, the first triangle reveals underlying thought structures rooted in capitalism and democracy, while the second is tied to narrative structures.

On a more basic level, the Producer/Medium/Audience/ triangle is tied to linguistics and "pure" structuralism--the Levi-Straussian notion, for example, that myths and music are guided by what amounts to a structural "grammar." Clearly ideology can be built *into* such structures, and a combination of "pure" structuralism with the Frankfurt or Birmingham Schools (which would be a general-particular or practical-theoretical overlap) would yield such hybrids as feminist and Marxist literary criticism and film studies.

The aesthetic approaches to narrative construction and transitional technique in early cinematic theory became grounded in two schools of directorial emphasis: montage and mis-en-scene, which referred respectively to the manipulation of time and the manipulation of space.

In looking at the present example of overlapping general/theoretical triangles, we can tap montage and mis-en-scene theory in film, which points to thought structures imagined by an *artist*, communicated via the narrative structures inherent to the *medium* and interpreted or decoded by the *audience*. The institution is present only implicitly, and the texts are regarded in aggregate as larger patterns, and therefore subsumed by the primary interactions of this domain.

The term "'montage' came to specifically describe a sequence made up of a quick succession of brief shots blending and dissolving into one another, created to compress action and convey the passage of time," according to Ephraim Katz.(1979: 820-821) On a more general level, the term "came to represent the rhetorical arrangement of thoughts in juxtaposition so that the clash between two adjoining images creates a third, independent entity and a whole new meaning." The emotional world could be opened up to a new mode of experience and abstract ideas could be expressed visually, largely through the dramatic distortion of ordinary time.

On the other hand, mis-en-scene, "literally, the placing of a scene," concentrated on the activity of images within the individual frame. Stylistically it is often associated with depth of field (its proponents are fond of citing examples of deep focus from Citizen Kane). Mis-en-scene is embraced by those who prefer a style which constructs "dramatic interrelationships within the frame," rather than between frames, thus preserving "spatial reality," and addressing "our normal psychological way of processing events." The proponents of mis-en-scene saw "montage as disruptive to the psychological unity of man with his environment."

The conflict between these aesthetic philosophies and their psychological implications was part of the theoretical analysis of "cinema's process of 'narrativization,' " which subsumes the organization of space and time to the "causal relations of narrative," according to Flitterman-Lewis (in Allen 1987: 193). Like depth of focus in mis-en-scene, the compression of action and use of rhetorical juxtaposition which characterize montage were formal, technical approaches to the creation of meaning in an unfolding narrative.

Early Russian cinematographers like Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein, who studied the potential for editing as a tool for influence, quickly tuned in to the separate meaning that formal features, especially technical transitions, carry. Pudovkin outlined how "editing can even work on the emotions," by pointing to the ability of editing to imitate a rapid, agitated glance of an excited observer through "rapidly alternating pieces, creating a stirring scenario editing-construction," or the use of "long pieces changing by mixes, conditioning a calm and slow editing construction." He refers to editing as the "guidance of the attention of the spectator," and maintains that "the sequence of these pieces must not be uncontrolled, but must correspond to the natural transference of attention of an imaginary observer." (Pudovkin in Mast and Cohen 1985: 85-86)

The formal qualities of cinema, then, (as well as those of any media technology) have inherent "grammars," or deep structures, which a structuralist would say wield influences on the structure of thought which may be more basic than the influences of content.

We are attempting to overlap the narrative structure of film, then, with the underlying thought structures of democracy and capitalism revealed to liberal political economic theory. We can use the lens of this overlap, for example, to investigate how Russian ideology in the 1920's informed the cinematic narrative structure of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potempkin*, and compare this mix of ideological thought structures situated in political economy and

"grammatical" thought structures situated in film narrative to the corresponding mix of these forces operating in American films. We can then investigate and develop the connections between American film narrative aesthetics and the reproduction of democratic and capitalist ideologies.

Structuralism (P-M-A) and Semiotics (P-T-A) Another quick example will reveal how the relationship of overlapping general/theoretical triangles on the pentagon model can help clarify theoretical distinctions:

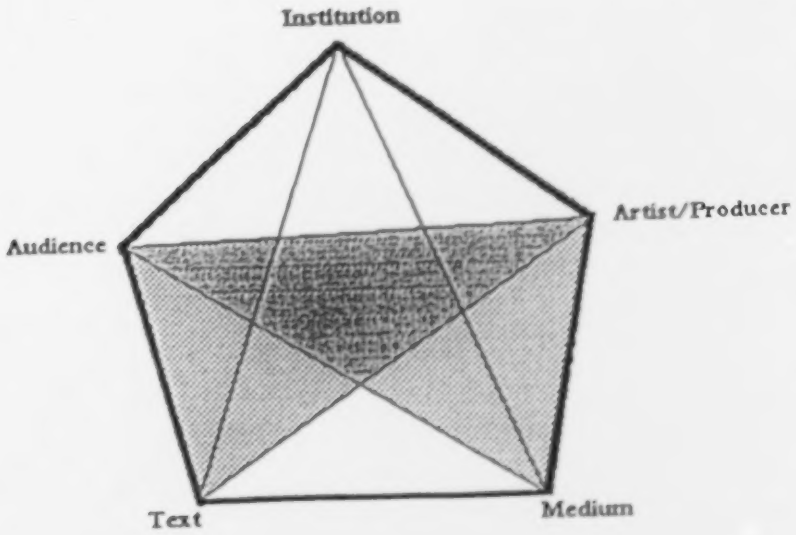


Figure 10

The distinctions between semiotics (Producer-Signifier/Text-Signified/ Audience-Interpretant) and structuralism (Producer/Medium/Audience), which we have seen operating in our film grammar example, are often vaguely or esoterically drawn. Both are general/theoretical-- as we have seen, their common function is that each approaches the structure of thought, and they diverge in where they situate that structure. Our model graphically depicts a great deal of overlap, which explains why semiotics and structuralism are often spoken in the same breath. But a quick glance shows us that they have only "audience" and "producer" in common, that semiotics includes "text" while structuralism includes "medium." A useful way to characterize the difference between them, then, would be to point out that 1) Structuralism situates the structuring of thought in the language-like "grammars" of particular modes of communication, including media technologies, which convey messages, while 2) Semiotics situates the structuring of thought in the symbolic character of the messages themselves. To a structuralist "texts" constitute a collective force more than a collection of particularized forces, so they are subsumed in the medium. To a semiotician "medium" is a tool that the producer/artist (signifier) uses to create texts (signified), so it is implicit in the relations between the two.

Relationship V: Overlap of Particular/Practical and General/Theoretical Triangles

Example: Semiotics (P-T-A) Leads to Diffusion and Policy Studies (I-P-M)

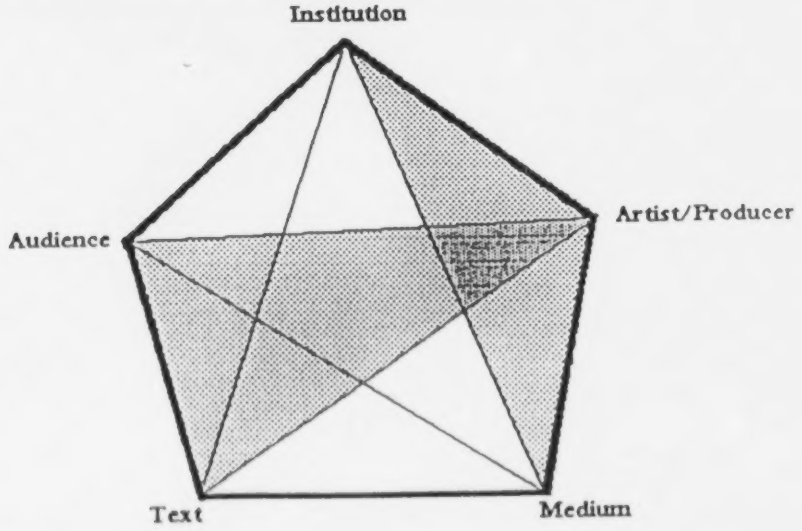


Figure 11

Problem: How might the design of the so-called "information superhighway" influence a particular culture's trends or patterns of social relations?

The relationship we concern ourselves with here is the overlap of one of each kind of triangle. The graphic representation (see above) actually resembles an arrow, a symbol of directionality and orientation. The general/theoretical triangle, which points to grander patterns in the structure of human thought, can serve to direct us to a particular site of inquiry, a particular/practical triangle, which will in turn help orient us to a particular theoretical problem-solving strategy.

By way of example, suppose we set out to try to anticipate how the design of the so-called "information superhighway" might impact a particular culture's trends or patterns of social relations. Let's begin with what we know about the superhighway's design. We know that on the internet, for example, large gatherings of people from all over the country and sometimes the world "hang out" in "real time" in "virtual salons" that exist only in "Cyberspace." Other people publish small-circulation on-line special interest "zines" which allow a publisher/writer and her readers to discuss the content of the zines on a daily basis. Still others will soon exchange personal home videos over the superhighway-- people will be able to "date" or at least visit each other visually and kinesthetically from across the coasts.

Furthermore, the longer people play with their home camcorders or desktop publishing programs and the more aesthetically powerful, efficient, and "user-friendly" these technologies become (thanks, in part, to even the most mercenary of market forces), the more "media literate" they will become--people will more easily absorb the vocabularies of, for example, video production or publication design. This means that they will increasingly approach the mastery, if not the creative talent, of media professionals. There is, to illustrate, a third "market" for camcorders these days situated at the leaky borders between consumers and professionals, aptly labeled the "prosumer" market.

The situation that the design of the superhighway and general patterns of recent innovation in media technologies presents, then, is an increasing intimacy between senders and receivers, as well as increasingly common instances of personal mastery of story-telling and message-sending devices and vocabularies. In short, 1) senders and receivers (**artist/producers** and **audiences**) will become more intimately connected than was the case, for example, in the era of network-dominated media fare for the "masses." That intimate connection will be carried along in the stories and messages we tell each other (**texts**), which we do with increasingly more sophisticated tools and skills.

We consult, therefore, our Producer/Text/Audience triangle. The media technologies we employ *enable* the social relations we are seeking to reveal, but they are only *implicit* in the relations themselves. Similarly, our concentration on the increasing emergence of interactive two-way patterns of communication represents a *shift away* from institution-dominated message and meaning-making and toward more direct channels between producers and audiences. The Producer/Text/Audience triangle is the province of semiotics, which explicitly states its irreducible triad in plainly analogous terms: Signifier/Signified/Interpretant.

Where then, can semiotics, what Saussure calls the study of "the life of signs within society," point us as we seek an understanding of larger trends in social relations that might arise from the conditions we've described? (quoted in Turner, 1990: 16) Our general/theoretical semiotics triangle, is, by the definition suggested earlier, a site of *structuring* for human thought. The semiotic lens can be trained at length, then, on the structure that resides in the irreducible interaction of signifier/signified/interpretant within the emerging contexts of interactive mediated exchange. But we need to know who the people embarking on these semiotic encounters in Cyberspace *are*, as well who they are *not*, on a larger social scale if we seek an understanding of how the superhighway might alter a culture's major social patterns. We *need* to locate and identify these people demographically in aggregate.

The relation that inheres in our general-particular or theoretical-practical overlap involves, as discussed earlier and as conveniently symbolized by the arrow-shaped graphic overlay, a movement from the general/theoretical basis of thought-structuring toward particularized, historically contingent locations, a particular/practical triangle. The arrow points us to the Institution/Producer/Medium triangle. This is not a metaphysical accident like a casting of the I-Ching (which is not to suggest that I necessarily have any objections to metaphysical accidents). The formation of the arrow owes to the retention of a common point--the users (producers) we are concentrating on and seek to identify, and the shifting of the other two points *from* their positions a step *away* from (thus bypassing and abstracting) the chain-of-process continuum *to* the spots directly *adjacent* to the producers on the chain of process continuum in search of a particularized location in historically contingent relations.

So where has the arrow pointed us? The Institution/Producer/Medium triangle is the domain of diffusion studies and policy studies--we seek to find the message-makers (producers) who gain access to media technologies (medium) and what political and economic forces (institution) determine this access. This is the domain, for example, of UNESCO's McBride report, "Many Voices, One World," (1980) which sought to establish systematic strategies for distributing and using media technologies in developing countries--designed, in theory and intention at least, to improve living conditions in those countries.

Recall that our original problem was to investigate how the design of the information superhighway might impact a particular culture's trends or patterns of social relations. We move, then, from the general/theoretical, structure-of-thought patterns which are characterized by the semiotic environment of interactive media to the particular/practical, historically contingent question of who does and does not have access to the technologies in question. Will the demographics of access and diffusion reveal and characterize, for example, an electronic media underclass--a percentage of people who will increasingly be removed further from the information-age economy that resides in on-line access? If so, what will relations between this underclass and other members of society, whom we have characterized as experimenting with virtual intimacy and with fluency in new media vocabularies?

In short, our theoretical approach to the problem should involve moving back and forth between patterns of human thought within a changing symbolic environment and patterns of media access: semiotics and diffusion theory. The arrow has pointed the way to a useful strategy of theoretical inquiry.

Conclusion: Media Theory as Interdisciplinary Conversation

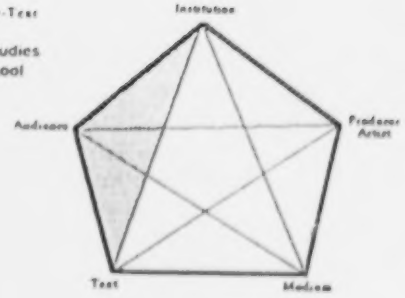
Media studies is more fundamentally the study of communication--it is intertwined with and ultimately inseparable from the processes of human communication that require no hard technologies and that are the focus of our kinfolk studying rhetoric, interpersonal communication and the like. The sense in which media scholars may be able to repay our debt to other disciplines, then, is that we may be able to offer some updated perspectives on how the various humanities and social sciences can better communicate with each other. This is not to suggest that they don't communicate already--only that media studies may be able to offer a better-integrated overview or model of how such interdisciplinary conversations might take place.

APPENDIX I

The Five Particular/Practical Triangles

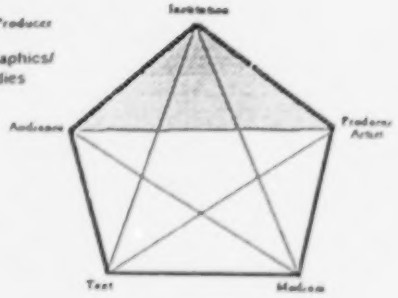
Institution-Audience-Text

British Cultural Studies
& Frankfurt School



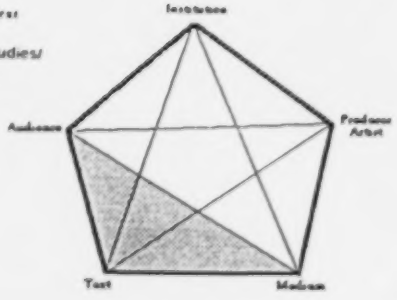
Institution-Audience-Producer

Newsroom Demographics/
Managerial Studies



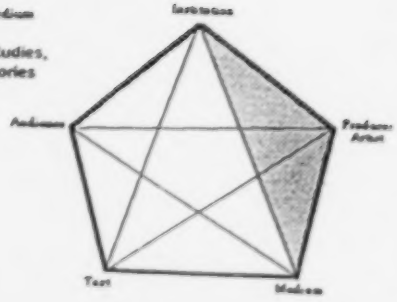
Audience-Medium-Text

American Cultural Studies/
Ritual Studies



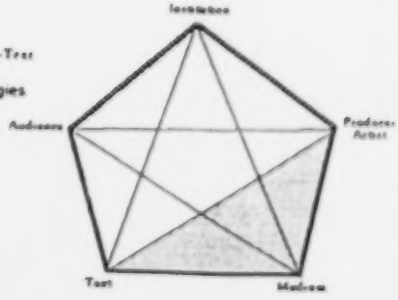
Institution-Producer-Medium

Diffusion and Policy Studies,
Normative Press Theories



Producer-Medium-Text

New Technologies



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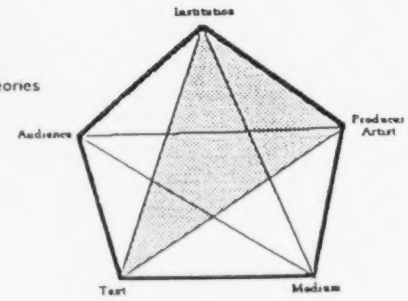
The Five General/Theoretical Triangles

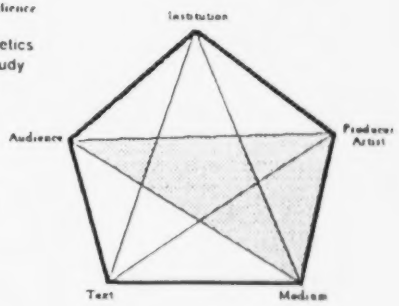
Institution-Producer-Text

Liberal Political Economic Theories



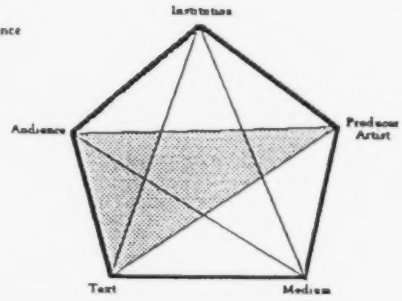
Producer-Medium-Audience

Structuralist Aesthetics
Literary Genre Study
Film Theory



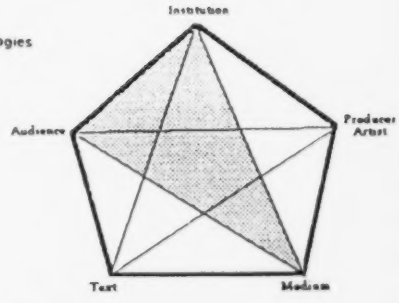
Producer-Text-Audience

Semiotics



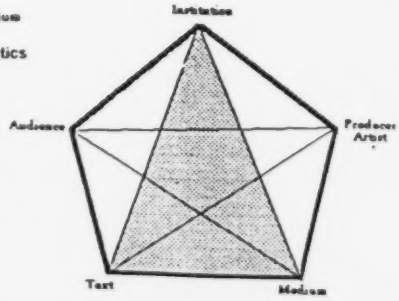
Institution-Medium-Audience

History of Communication Technologies
Mass Society Theory



Institution-Text-Medium

Postmodern Aesthetics



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